

## **Forming an Opinion**

### **A WebQuest for To Dam or Not To Dam**

#### **Introduction**

When a country builds a dam in order to generate hydroelectricity, officials must consider negative impacts the dam might have on the environment. In Brazil, a proposed dam is coming under fire from people who are concerned about the effects the dam will have on the rainforest and the indigenous peoples who live there. The Belo Monte Dam, which would be the third largest dam in the world, is scheduled to be constructed on the Xingu River, a tributary of the Amazon River. The reservoir formed by the dam would flood hundreds of square kilometers of the rainforest. In this WebQuest, you will learn about the proposed Belo Monte Dam. Then, you will write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about the dam.

#### **Task**

The local newspaper is reporting on the Belo Monte Dam and has asked for opinions from community members. Your task is to write a letter to the editor that states your opinions about the dam and explains the reasons for your opinions. In the letter, you will try to sway readers to your point of view.

#### **Process**

Use the resources listed in the Resources section to begin your research. The Web sites listed are good starting points, but further Internet research will be necessary. Record your answers to the following questions. You will use them to write a letter at the end of the project.

1. Why does Brazil's government want to build the dam?
2. How will the proposed dam affect the environment?
3. How does untouched rainforest benefit the environment?
4. How will the proposed dam affect indigenous peoples?
5. What concerns do some engineers have about the dam?
6. If the dam is built, will further development follow?

#### **Letter**

Once you have completed your research, organize what you have learned about the Belo Monte Dam into a "pro" list and a "con" list. Use the list to form your opinions about the dam. Then write a letter to the editor, expressing your opinions and stating the reasons for them. Don't forget to include evidence from your research that supports your opinions. Try to persuade other readers to share your view of the dam.

#### **Resources**

[Brazil: Belo Monte Dam](#)

[Conservation Strategy Fund](#)

[Rainforest Foundation](#)

[United Nations Human Rights \(Report on Indigenous Peoples' Rights\)](#)

[United Nations Cyber School Bus](#)

**Evaluation**

Read this rubric to see how you will be scored on this activity.

Criteria					Points
	0	5	10	15	
<b>Task</b>	The task was not completed.	It appears that some effort was made to complete the task, but few opinions were included in the letter.	The task was completed as assigned, but some of the rationale for opinions on the dam was questionable.	The task was completed with great attention to detail and thorough documentation.	
<b>Process</b>	The process was not followed.	The process was followed, but not all of the questions were answered.	The process was followed, and the rationale for the opinion about the dam was based on sound evidence.	It is clear that much research went into the project. The opinions about the dam show that the students spent a lot of time thinking about the issues.	
<b>Letter</b>	The letter is sloppy and not well prepared.	The letter includes key ideas but lacks general cohesiveness.	The letter is well organized, and opinions are clearly stated. Opinions are backed up with evidence from research.	The letter is well organized, opinions are clearly stated, and the attempt to persuade readers to share the students' views is highly convincing.	
<b>Total Score</b>					